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Ministry  
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Environment

# FACTS

## FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

AN EDUCATIONAL FACT SHEET ABOUT WASTE

### HOW TO PUBLICIZE A RECYCLING DRIVE



A recycling drive is a special event, sometimes a day and sometimes a month in length, but it has a definite beginning and end. Good publicity is essential to its success. There are two major aims in publicity: (1) to gain high participation in the project and (2) to teach participants how to recycle in their home.

#### FIRST STEPS

1. Pinpoint responsibility for publicity to an individual or committee.
2. Decide how large an area your drive will cover (e.g., 4 square blocks, a school community, a municipal area). How many households are there? How do people get information in the area -- is there a local newspaper, active neighborhood association, any well-used bulletin boards?
3. Get publicity contacts and ideas from a local group which has successfully run projects similar to yours (rummage sales, neighborhood beautification campaigns, walk-a-thons).
4. Select several publicity ideas from those presented below and consider the following: (1) How many people will such publicity reach? (2) Will the people reached be those most likely to participate? (3) What kinds of expertise and how much human labor will be involved in the preparation and distribution of the publicity? (4) How much will materials and labor cost? (5) Can donations be found to cover these costs?
5. Plan the timing of publicity. A small neighborhood paper drive should be publicized at least 2-3 weeks in advance; planning and publicity for April Earth Day events which involve the collection of great amounts of recyclables can begin as early as February.

#### GETTING THE WORD OUT

##### CANVASSING

This is door-to-door contact, with or without a printed leaflet. The aim is to reach all households in the drive's area with person-to-person information about your project. It is feasible only when you have a number of volunteers, but it is enormously effective. Expect it to take time: many people will have questions about how to prepare recyclables, what your organization does, and what recycling is. If you have a leaflet, you can leave it at households where no one is home (design is to be a door knob hanger, or attach firmly to door or slip into mail slot in door; it is illegal to put into mailbox). Since you want to encourage

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people immediately to begin saving and sorting recyclables for you, canvassing can take place weeks before the actual drive. A follow-up canvass, perhaps one week before the drive, will serve to remind participants. For follow-up, a local business may be willing to lend you a reverse phone directory (organized by street) so that you can call instead of visit.

## LEAFLETS

A leaflet gives people information about your project they can keep -- and use when they need it. Tell the reader who is sponsoring the drive, when it will be, where it will be, what materials will be taken, and how they should be prepared. The entire leaflet should be readable in about one minute because people may not be willing to take any more time at this early stage. Illustrations, bold printing, colored ink, and colored paper all help attract attention. A one-sided leaflet can also be used as a poster.

The greatest challenge of a successful leaflet is not design, but distribution. Use existing delivery systems whenever possible -- schools may send home your leaflets with students, or newsboys might deliver a notice of your paper drive with the newspaper. Ask grocery stores if you can leave leaflets at check-out stands for customers to take; perhaps the clerks will even stuff them in the bags for you. If yours is a non-profit group with a bulk mailing permit, design the leaflet to be a mailer (with return address and bulk permit number) and call the Post Office for regulations on preparing third-class mailings -- the cost is about one-fourth that of a regular third-class mailing. Another possibility for mail distribution is to enclose the leaflet as a bill stuffer with phone, electric, or doctor bills.

## POSTERS

A poster attracts the public's attention to your project. Don't depend on it alone to bring in a lot of materials for your drive, but you can use it as an initial announcement (before distribution of leaflets, press releases, etc.) or as "on-the-street" reinforcement of other publicity.

Keep the poster simple, uncluttered. As with the leaflet, make your information stand out by using strong colors, attractive lettering or type, and uncrowded layout. Posters can be handmade, printed on an offset press using colored ink or colored paper, silk-screened, typed or drawn on a stencil and mimeographed. A heavy-duty poster with tear-off section (perforated) for take-home information can be designed.

Posters can be hung throughout the community on bulletin boards and in windows; laundromats and grocery stores are particularly good places. If you put up posters on bus stop sign poles and other such locations, be sure to take them down when your project is through as they can easily become litter.

## PRESS COVERAGE

Coverage of your drive in the newspaper and, if appropriate, on radio and TV, not only provides needed information to a wide public but legitimizes your project in a way only an outside voice can.

Press releases can announce a drive, report on its progress, cover special problems or successes, and present the results of the drive (the amount of money earned, tonnage recycled, how the money was spent). Keep the release to the basics -- what, when, where, how, and why. The more like a news story it's written, the more likely it will be used as you wrote it. Deliver your releases personally or follow up with a phone call.

Visit the community newspaper office. Take all printed information about your project. Ask for an announcement of the drive and suggest ideas for pictures and feature articles. One eastern Oregon newspaper used the "Recycling Handbook" cartoons in advertising a local project; each week, prior to the once monthly drive, it printed a different cartoon showing how to prepare a particular recyclable, along with details about the drive. The Oregonian and Oregon Journal will be much more likely to print news about a city or region-wide drive than a neighborhood project.

Releases can be sent to local radio and TV stations as well -- but choose avenues that will reach the particular community involved. There are about 30 radio stations in the Portland area alone, many of which serve specialized age or musical interest groups. A station headquartered in a certain area is often willing to publicize a project in that community even though its broadcast range is much wider. Do send releases to all area TV stations, as recycling makes a good picture story.

Put out a release at the end of your drive, informing the public where it can take recyclables on a continuing basis. It's harder to get people to start recycling than to get them to stop.

## CALENDAR ANNOUNCEMENTS

While their audience will be smaller than for regular news coverage, the calendars of events announced by newspapers, community newsletters and TV and radio public affairs shows should not be overlooked.

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS SHOWS

For in-depth coverage of your project, TV and radio stations have taped or live community interview shows. (One drawback is that they are generally aired during the early morning hours or on Sunday.)

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

This is an excellent way to reach vast numbers of people. Before making a radio or television spot, be sure to contact the stations you hope will use it. Find out their PSA requirements and whether the audience you want to reach is the audience they serve. For example, one station may receive 400 spots a week from organizations, but use only 25, chosen for widest public interest because its audience is 400,00 people between the ages of 18 and 34. To qualify for free public service advertising, the group which sponsors your drive must be a registered, non-profit corporation.

Radio spots can be taped or written. Some stations may ask you to come to the studio and tape your announcement according to their format; the station then plays the announcement frequently for several days. A written spot can be equally effective. Since it is to be read live by an announcer, use short, active sentences. Ten, twenty, thirty, and sixty second spots are used.

A simple slide TV spot with written script (10, 20, 30, 60 seconds -- at least one slide to every five seconds of copy) can advertise a major recycling event, such as a city-wide Earth Day drive. Often, TV stations will help you make a spot.

## HELP FROM THE COMMUNITY

A particularly efficient and often forgotten method for spreading the word about local projects is help from the active community organization. Schools, PTA, neighborhood associations, community action agency, churches, service clubs, and youth groups should be contacted early for assistance. They can announce the project at assemblies and meetings; enclose your leaflet in their regular mailings to members; mention the drive in their newsletters; if they want to do a service project, they may even help you with such activities as canvassing.

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Finally, you might inform the city council of your project and ask for a resolution of support. This can be publicized in a news release. At the same time, check on any regulations which might affect your project.

This article has been adapted with permission from the Recycling Information Office, Department of Environmental Quality, 1234 S.W. Morrison, Portland, Oregon, U.S.A.